Promoting Self-assessment Strategies: An Electronic Portfolio Approach

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Bio Data:
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Abstract
Creating electronic portfolios is proposed as an effective means to facilitate language learning and writing in particular because it enables learners to monitor their own writing process and to put into practice a multitude of writing strategies. Among the strategies practiced, self-assessment, a key learning strategy for autonomous language learning, is the less explored one. As such, this study set out to investigate how self-assessment was utilized by two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners when they were writing in their electronic portfolios. The data were collected by virtue of the following instruments: a) semi-structured interviews, b) an open-ended questionnaire, c) a self-assessment checklist, d) learners’ journals and e) essays. The collected data were coded into three categories—the learners’ general English learning background, the learners’ writing strategies, and the learners’ self-assessment practices. The findings suggested that both EFL learners employed an array of writing strategies—cognitive strategy, memory strategy and metacognitive self-assessment strategy—to approach specific writing tasks. The results also revealed that compiling electronic portfolios promoted learners’ self-assessment practice and thus encouraged self-directed language learning. However, the concern about the extent to which learners could be involved in grading process was raised due to unfamiliarity and traditional EFL teacher-student power relationship.

Key words: Self-assessment, Electronic Portfolio, Alternative Assessment, Language Learning Strategies

1. Introduction
It has been argued that self-assessment serves as an effective language learning strategy to promote autonomous language learning because it encourages language learners to assess their learning progress and in turn helps them to stay focused on their own learning (Chamot
The proponents of self-assessment strategies maintain that participating in self-assessment can help learners become skilled judges of their own strengths and weaknesses and establish realistic and attainable goals for themselves, thus developing their self-directed language learning ability (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Dickinson, 1987; Oscarson, 1997). A widely used instrument for self-assessment is the portfolio. Portfolios provide an opportunity for English as a Foreign / Second language (EFL/ESL) learners to monitor their own writing progress and take responsibility for meeting goals. By documenting growth over time through a systematic collection of their work, portfolios enable learners to see possibilities for reflection, redirection, and confirmation of their own learning efforts (O’Malley & Pierce, 1996). Simply put, when a student reviews a written piece and decides to revise and improve it, the student engages in self-assessment.

In the literature, a number of studies have been done to examine the relationship between self-assessment ratings and objective exams, teacher ratings or level of proficiency (Bachman & Palmer, 1989; Bailey, 1998; Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002; Heilenman, 1990; LeBlanc & Painchaud, 1985; Oscarsson, 1984), but only a few attempts have been made to explore how and if students use self-assessment strategies when they write. In addition, among the studies done on self-assessment strategies, most were carried out with ESL or Foreign Language (FL) students, with few efforts invested to target EFL learners. Given that the EFL context is a special research area because the concept of self-assessment may be quite unfamiliar and challenging to many EFL learners (Harris, 1997), the current study intends to probe the questions as to if and how EFL learners use self-assessment strategies when writing in their electronic portfolios.

The research questions that guided the investigation in this study go as follows.
1. What writing strategies are used by EFL learners when writing in the electronic portfolios?
2. Does creating electronic writing portfolios promote EFL learners’ use of self-assessment strategies? If it does, in what ways?
3. What are EFL students’ concerns about practicing self-assessment strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is self-assessment?

According to Oscarson (1997), self-assessment refers to how, under what conditions, and
with what effects learners and other users of a foreign or second language may judge their own ability in the language. It employs a variety of techniques to probe language learners’ proficiency, such as self-reports, self-testing, mutual peer-assessment, keeping learning journals, answering questionnaires, using global proficiency rating scales, and responding to so-called “can-do” statements that ask learners to respond if they are able to perform specific language functions. These techniques require learners’ awareness of their own progress, in terms not only of language but also of communicative objectives. As Chamot and O’Malley (1994) point out, “self-assessment requires the student to exercise a variety of learning strategies and higher order thinking skills that not only provide feedback to the student but also provide direction for future learning” (p. 119).

2.2. Portfolios as a medium for self-assessment

A widely used instrument for practicing self-assessment strategies is the portfolio. Portfolios provide an opportunity for learners to monitor their own progress and take responsibility for meeting goals. Gottlieb (2000) points out that through the portfolio approach “second language learners are acknowledged as contributors and the multicultural resources that the students bring to assessment situations serve as rich data sources” (p. 96). She further delineates that portfolios designed by second language learners can help capture the full range of the students’ competencies in one or more languages. Developmental portfolios also enable learners to demonstrate their growth in language proficiency, including oral language and literacy development, academic achievement, attitudinal variation in terms of acculturation and learning and acquisition of learning strategies (Gottlieb, 2000). Hence, at the heart of portfolio pedagogy is a place for self-assessment guided by learners (Hirvela & Pierson, 2000).

While portfolio assessment is practiced as an integral part of instruction, Paulson and Paulson (1992) argue that it also serves as a practical medium for self-assessment and propose three steps for practicing self-assessment with portfolios: documentation, comparison and integration. The first step, documentation, asks learners to provide a justification for the selected items for the portfolios. In comparison, learners compare a recent piece of work with an earlier one and identify ways that they have improved. In the final step, integration, learners use portfolios to provide examples of their growing strengths in oral or written language. These three steps not only facilitate reflection on learning but also prepare students to become independent learners.

When learners are engaged in portfolio development, a number of advantages have been
proposed, including fostering intrinsic motivation, responsibility and ownership, showing what students can do rather than what they can not do, giving a richer picture of the students’ ability and understanding, facilitating critical thinking, self-assessment and revision processes and providing tangible evidence of a student’s work (Brown, 2004; Brown & Hudson, 1998; Chen, 2006; Delett, Barnhardt & Kevorkian, 2001; Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Gottlieb, 1995; 2000; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Hirvela & Pierson, 2000; O’Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Weigle, 2002).

2.3. Electronic portfolios as an alternative
With the advent of technology, electronic portfolios are introduced. According to Barrett (2000), an electronic portfolio includes the use of electronic technologies that allow the portfolio developers to collect and organize artifacts in many formats. Heath (2002) proposes that once the portfolio is created electronically, it is easier to maintain, edit and update than its paper counterpart. With electronic portfolios, students’ work can be collected, stored and managed electronically, taking very little or no physical space. Furthermore, since Internet-based electronic portfolios are not constrained by time, they also enhance peer and teacher feedback, two major components of portfolio assessment. Therefore, electronic portfolios offer all of the advantages of regular portfolios such as the opportunity to self-assess the writing process, as well as other advantages regular portfolios lack (Pullman, 2002). For example, electronic portfolios move peer reviews and papers from manila folders to an online environment, which helps students become more aware of their peers as the audience and create their own public community of writers (Wall & Peltier, 1996). Thus, such a view of electronic portfolios ushers in the possibility of a new literacy and new ways of conceiving writing and writing pedagogy (Pullman, 2002). In short, as their paper counterparts, electronic portfolios play an important role not only in activating the students’ metacognitive strategies but also in promoting their autonomy.

2.4. Concerns about practicing self-assessment in the EFL contexts
A number of concerns have been raised about practicing self-assessment in the EFL contexts. First, the concept of self-assessment may be quite unfamiliar and threatening to many EFL learners because it changes traditional teacher-learner relationships (Blue, 1994; Heron, 1988). Therefore, training and support become crucial in this practice. Second, learners’ ability to self-assess accurately is controversial. Some research studies suggest that learners tend to say what they cannot do or what they find difficult to do rather than what they can do
(Bachman & Palmer, 1989). Third, learners are likely to be able to assess their abilities more accurately when they are provided with specific self-assessment statements that are closely related to their personal experience (Ross, 1998). These concerns have made the practice of self-assessment in the EFL classrooms challenging.

To sum up, self-assessment through portfolios is advocated and embraced by researchers. However, studies carried out on its counterpart, self-assessment in electronic portfolios, are few and far between. Moreover, little systematic attempt has been made to deal with EFL contexts, investigating if and how EFL learners use self-assessment strategies. Therefore, this study set out to take a closer look at EFL learners’ use of writing strategies, self-assessment strategies in particular, when they are writing in their electronic portfolios.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

The method used for this study was qualitative case study. According to Merriam (1998), a case study is a particularly suitable design if the researcher is interested in process. Therefore, the present study, aiming to explore, understand, and analyze EFL learners’ use of strategies, employed a case study to provide in-depth portraits of two EFL learners’ use of strategies while they were writing in their electronic portfolios.

3.2. Participants

In order to obtain in-depth information, this study focused on two participants selected by purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). According to Merriam (1998), purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researchers want to discover, understand, and gain insight; therefore, they must select participants from whom the most can be learned. Hence, data for the current study were collected through the researcher’s connection with a college-level EFL teacher in Taiwan, who required students to design electronic portfolios as an assignment for the class. The teacher was then asked to recommend some EFL students who showed interests in participating in the study. Then, the researcher began to contact the potential participants by e-mail. The two participants were finalized based on their willingness to participate in the study and completeness of their electronic portfolios. Both of them were college EFL learners who were enrolled in an English class at a university in an EFL context—Taiwan. Table 1 below presents each student’s background information.
Table 1: Students’ background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students (pseudo-name)</th>
<th>Kai-Yu*</th>
<th>A-Ling*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>College sophomore</td>
<td>College sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test performance</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The length of studying the target language</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of proficiency acquired</td>
<td>High-beginning</td>
<td>High-beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where they learn the language</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* To keep confidentiality, students’ real names were not revealed. Instead, pseudo-names were used.

3.3. Implementation

The portfolio project was implemented in an EFL classroom for a semester of 18 weeks. At the beginning of the semester, students learned how to create their own electronic portfolios at a free electronic portfolio website: [http://spaces.msn.com](http://spaces.msn.com), a ready-made webpage that calls for only minimal computer skills. During the semester, the students worked on and uploaded two required 300-word essays with drafts, gave peer feedback and revised essays according to teachers’ and peers’ comments. In addition, they were encouraged to upload self-chosen entries, such as diary entries and anecdotes. At the end of the semester, students’ portfolios were evaluated and took twenty percent of students’ final grade.

3.4. Data Collection

The data for the current study were collected through the following instruments:

* Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow the researcher to respond to the situations at hand, and to the emerging perspectives of the participants. Three semi-structured interviews were administered with each taking approximately 40 minutes. The
first interview, a warm-up, asked for the participants’ background information and explained the purpose of the study. The second and third interviews were more formal and specifically targeted the participants’ use of writing and self-assessment strategies. All of the interviews were done in the participants’ native language, Chinese. The interviews were followed by three e-mail interviews, conducted in Chinese, in order to clarify some points that need further explanation (See Appendix I for sample interview questions).

Open-ended questionnaire. An open-ended questionnaire was administered (See Appendix II for the questionnaire) in which participants could choose to answer the questions in Chinese or English. Based on three major research questions, the researcher crafted the questionnaire and then forwarded it to a qualified colleague for peer debriefing. Then, the researcher revised the questionnaire in accordance with the comments the colleague provided. Having no time limitation, the questionnaire allowed participants enough time to formulate their answers and respond to the questions at their disposal.

Self-assessment checklist. Designed by the researcher and commented by the same colleague, a self-assessment checklist was distributed (See Appendix III for the checklist). The checklist simply asked learners to rate their essay on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing poor and 5 representing excellent. In addition, the checklist also required learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Journals. The learners’ journals on their English learning experience were collected. In the journals, learners discussed how they learned English and reflected on their English writing process.

Essays with drafts. Two 300-word essays were collected from each participant. As one of the class assignments, the essay asked learners to reflect on the topics of leisure time and the impact of TV on our lives. Two drafts of each essay were also collected for analysis.

3.5. Analysis Procedure
The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and coded into three categories—the learners’ general English learning background, the learners’ writing strategies, and the learners’ self-assessment practices.

4. Findings
4.1. Case one: Kai-Yu
4.1.1. Kai-Yu’s general English learning background
Kai-Yu started to learn English when she was a sixth grader in elementary school. Like many
other students, Kai-Yu went to cram schools to improve her English when she was in junior high school (7th to 9th grades) (1st interview, 03/20/2005). However, unlike her peers, she enjoyed the classes at cram school even though the classes finished at almost eleven o’clock at night. She believed the intensive language classes would help her improve English a lot. Nevertheless, she reported that she lost her motivation to learn English when she entered senior high school (10th to 12th grades) due to the lack of frequent exposure to English and teachers who could push her to study harder (1st interview, 03/20/2005). When she entered the English department at college, she was very excited about the courses in the department. She became motivated to learn English again. In addition to attending classes, she engaged herself in English-related extracurricular activities such as English storytelling and English songs competitions. In her own leisure time, Kai-Yu sought opportunities to practice her English, such as listening to English radio, seeing movies in English, keeping diaries in English and chatting with friends online (2nd interview, 05/03/2005). She also revealed that she sometimes wrote letters or emails to her English native-speaking pen pal in New Zealand (journal, 06/28/2005).

4.1.2. Kai-Yu’s writing strategies

While writing in her electronic portfolio, Kai-Yu reported that she enjoyed keeping a diary and writing anecdotes the most. She noted, “I like to write the diary entries in my portfolio. It’s a good way to express myself, and I do like to do this…” (open-ended questionnaire, 06/06/2005). When she was writing, she used a few strategies. First, she used planning as a metacognitive strategy. Before she wrote an English sentence, she usually brainstormed in her mind some tentative sentences. Then, she picked out the best one and wrote it down. In addition, when she wrote an essay, she stated that she drew an outline so that she knew what to write for each paragraph (2nd interview, 05/03/2005). Second, she used resourcing as a cognitive strategy. When she could not think of the right word in English, she usually referred to reference materials such as dictionaries and textbooks. She explained that “When I can not write the word in English, I usually consult with my electronic dictionary or classmates” (2nd interview, 05/03/2005). Third, she used goal-setting as a metacognitive strategy. She set a goal that she would learn how to write better by reading some good essays (2nd interview, 05/03/2005). Finally, she used elaboration of prior knowledge as a cognitive strategy. She used her background knowledge when writing essays in her electronic portfolio. For example, she commented, “…before I do the portfolio, I always review the readings in the textbook. Then, I connect the readings to my experience and think of some
ideas…” (open-ended questionnaire, 06/06/2005). In brief, when approaching specific writing tasks in her electronic portfolio, Kai-Yu employed and varied both cognitive and metacognitive strategies to increase her learning effectiveness. Therefore, in view of Chamot’s (2001) synthesized definition of good language learner, she demonstrated the abilities to monitor language production, practice communicating in the language, make use of prior linguistic knowledge, and use various memorization techniques.

4.1.3. Kai-Yu’s self-assessment practices

While writing in her electronic portfolio, Kai-Yu often engaged herself in evaluating her entries. For instance, Kai-Yu ranked her essay on the topic of leisure time as the best work in her electronic portfolio because she believed that she could connect her writing to her personal experience and express her ideas well. Moreover, in the self-assessment checklist, she wrote “I think the best part is the essay on leisure time because it shows my thoughts completely…” (Self-assessment checklist, 05/20/2005). When she was asked to self-assess her first essay by assigning a score from 1 to 5, she graded her essay with a 3. She then explained by commenting, “…although the writing is not excellent and the ideas are not insightful enough, it presents my effort in linking the assignment to instruction…” (the self-assessment checklist, 05/20/2005). Hence, it became clear that through deciding the best work and rating the entries, she learned to take control over her own learning and to become a more autonomous learner. However, when she was asked if she preferred self-assessment to teacher assessment, she did not seem to have a strong preference for self-assessment. She indicated that “Actually, I accept any way of assessment” (open-ended questionnaire, 06/06/2005). Being accustomed to the teacher’s authority in deciding the evaluation method, she noted that “No matter I like it or not, I don’t think that I have choices. I will just do my job and fulfill the requirements…Grading is teacher’s job…” (3rd interview, 07/05/2005).

Her responses pinpointed the cultural factors in self-assessment. Students, in some cultures, including those from Asian cultures, tended to be passive recipients of knowledge who do not take part in the evaluation process. Therefore, cultural acceptance of self-assessment needs to be further raised.

4.2. Case two: A-Ling

4.2.1. A-Ling’s general English learning background

A-Ling has been learning English since her junior high school years. She reported that she thought learning English was not difficult for her at that time because she just needed to
memorize the vocabulary and sentences in the textbooks (1st interview, 03/20/2005). Since she was good at memorization, she always got good grades in English (journal, 06/28/2005). However, she revealed that when she entered senior high school, she realized that learning English was not just memorizing vocabulary; instead, it involved other skills such as listening, grammar and writing. Then, she started to spend some time improving those skills. For example, she read some stories and composition samples to improve her writing skills. After graduating from senior high school, she chose English as her major at college. Among English classes, she enjoyed reading and grammar classes the most. In the reading class, she usually read out loud the texts to improve her reading comprehension. Moreover, she believed that her grammar class helped her build the basic knowledge for composing an essay. Finally, she shared her strategy of learning English, elaborating that she spent one to two hours a day reading in English to improve her English proficiency (journal, 06/28/2005).

4.2.2. A-Ling’s writing strategies

It was found that A-Ling employed a number of strategies when writing for her electronic portfolio. First, she used planning as a metacognitive strategy. She usually spent some time drafting when composing an essay. She planned in her mind the content, including topic sentences and supporting ideas. Then, she chose the best ones to write. Second, she used memory strategy. She believed that memorizing more vocabulary could improve her writing ability. Hence, she revealed that “I would memorize more vocabulary to improve my writing ability” (2nd interview, 05/03/2005). Finally, it was noted that she used goal-setting as a metacognitive strategy. To improve her writing ability, she set a goal that she would read more rhetoric and grammar books (open-ended questionnaire, 06/06/2005). As metacognitive knowledge is considered to be essential for the self-regulation of learning (Wenden, 1998), A-Ling’s use of planning and goal-setting techniques well illustrated her self-management practices.

4.2.3. A-Ling’s self-assessment practices

A-Ling ranked all the artifacts equally and explained that she tried her best in completing every artifact in her electronic portfolio. When she was invited to rate her essay on the topic of leisure time, she assigned it a 4. She elaborated that she wrote down what she has learned from the reading and integrated personal ideas in the essay (self-assessment checklist, 05/20/2005). In addition, she specifically mentioned that she used self-assessment strategies when writing. She constantly checked back on and evaluated her entries in her portfolio. She
reported, “…I often view the entries. Before I put my entries in my portfolio, I’ve checked them many times…” (open-ended questionnaire, 06/06/2005). Furthermore, when she was asked if she preferred self-assessment to teacher assessment, she expressed that “I accept any method required in class” (3rd interview, 07/05/2005). Similarly, she explained,
…I can give myself a score in the checklist. I think it’s informal grading for myself. But, for the midterm exam and final exam, I want teacher to give me grades…I also want my teacher to give me the grade for the entire semester. I feel more comfortable that way because teacher should be the grader…(3rd interview, 07/05/2005).
It was, thus, evident that self-assessment was treated more appropriately as a language learning strategy than as a grading method due to the traditional cultural and educational beliefs in the EFL classrooms.

5. Discussion
5.1. Strategy use
A close analysis of the data revealed that while writing in their electronic portfolios, both EFL learners employed an array of strategies in writing—cognitive strategy including resourcing, memory strategy including rote memorization, and metacognitive strategies including planning, goal-setting, and self-assessment. Since cognitive and memory strategies were typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners (Oxford, 1990), they were used by these two learners to store and manipulate an amount of information such as new vocabulary and rhetorical expressions. Moreover, among these strategies deployed, metacognitive strategies were used the most. These two EFL learners were distinguished by their awareness of and the ability to apply the appropriate metacognitive strategies for a specific writing task, which was critical to self-regulation of learning (Wenden, 1998). As they planned for, brainstormed some ideas for, and evaluated their writing tasks, they developed their ability to self-manage their own learning. In short, as Rubin (2001) indicated that “skilled self-managed learners possess sufficient knowledge and appropriate well-developed beliefs about self, the learning process, possible strategies, the nature of tasks, and prior knowledge” (p. 26), these two learners developed skills to go about their learning on their own outside the classroom.

5.2. Self-assessment in practice
Electronic portfolios not only provided these two learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their authentic language use but also gave them a chance to reflect on their learning and self-
assess their performance on specific tasks. With multiple artifacts including the drafts of essays documented, electronic portfolios served as a lens through which the students witnessed how their learning evolved. At the same time, they also learned to judge the quality of their work, identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it was clear that this practice involved students directly in the assessment process, which helped students understand what it meant to learn a language autonomously (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Furthermore, the learners not merely viewed their past performance or competence but also set goals for improving their writing skills. Hence, goal-setting, one type of metacognitive self-assessment (Brown, 2004), fostered learners’ intrinsic motivation for enhancing their writing samples in their electronic portfolios. In sum, the learners became more conscious about self-reflection and autonomy through self-assessment practice while creating electronic portfolios. In other words, they were encouraged to become the self-assessors of their developing capabilities beyond formal education.

5.3. Concerns
Although these two learners practiced self-assessment strategies while writing in their portfolios, they did not have a preference over self-assessment. This could be explained by their concerns about the extent to which they could be involved in the grading process. Brought up in an educational culture where teachers always played a dominant role in grading, the learners perceived that their teachers had the authority and responsibility in grading and were not accustomed to assigning scores for themselves. Thus, despite that they did well on judging the quality of their work, reflecting on their entries, they still relied on teacher judgment to produce a score. The results corresponded with previous studies (Blue, 1994; Chen, 2005; Harris, 1997) that since self-assessment changed the traditional teacher-learner relationship, it might be quite challenging and dubious to EFL learners. In short, EFL learners tended to worry about self-assessment when it came to grading.

6. Conclusion and Implications
This study investigated how EFL learners exercised self-assessment strategies while writing in their electronic portfolios. It has been found that the two participating EFL learners employed cognitive, memory, metacognitive strategies to approach specific writing tasks, followed by self-assessment strategies to develop their ability to self-manage their own English learning. While practicing self-assessment strategies, they judged the quality of their entries by identifying strengths and weaknesses, reflected on the learning process by
constantly reviewing essays before posting them onto the portfolios. Therefore, it is evident that serving as a tool that collects both learning process and product, electronic portfolios afforded students a chance to exercise self-assessment strategies.

Nevertheless, while self-assessment was embraced as a strategy to promote language learning, it was confronted with such thorny issues in EFL contexts as students’ unfamiliarity and contradicting teacher-student power relationship. With an uncertainty of the extent to which they could be involved in grading process, students still relied heavily on teacher judgment on the score. Hence, it can be concluded that self-assessment functioned well as a language learning strategy; however, practicing it as a grading instrument for EFL students might warrant further research efforts before its effectiveness could be determined.

Finally, the results from the study suggested some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers. First, to mitigate EFL students’ unfamiliarity with self-assessment, EFL teachers could seek assistance from electronic portfolios and make them as a platform for practicing self-assessment. With concrete, recorded evidence of learning, electronic portfolios enable learners to monitor how their language learning processes develop. In other words, rather than retrieving their past performance from memory, students, while self-evaluating their language skills, can capitalize on their portfolios that document their learning process through multiple drafts and make informed decisions. Second, to grapple with the concern about the changing teacher-student relationships arising from the incorporation of self-assessment practices into classrooms in the Asian educational milieu, EFL teachers need to raise students’ cultural acceptance of self-assessment through increasing student involvement and redefining teachers' role. Involving students in establishing assessment criteria not merely empowers them but creates an opportunity for them to take responsibility for their learning. Moreover, EFL teachers need to redefine their roles and provide systematic training and constant guidance. As facilitators who encourage student autonomy, teachers need to continually help learners review their own language progress so that learners can be fully aware of their learning and find self-assessment as an effective language learning strategy.

References


Appendix I: Sample Interview Questions

1. When did you start to learn English?

2. Did you like English when you first started to learn it? Why? Why not?

3. Can you talk about how you learned English when you were in junior high school and senior high school?

4. Were your learning experiences at junior high school and senior high school different? Why?

5. Among the classes you are taking and have taken in the department, which one do you enjoy most and which one do you dislike? Why?

6. What are some ways you do to improve your English?

7. What are your goals for writing in this semester?

8. Do you like to write in English? What do you like to write? (summary of an article, diary, essay?) Why?

9. Do you plan before you write an essay in your portfolio? How?

10. Describe the procedure when you write an essay in your e-portfolio?

11. What are some ways you do to make your essay better?

12. How do you improve your English writing? What are your strategies?

13. What could you do to be a better writer?

Appendix II: Questionnaire

What do you like about creating your portfolio? Why?

Answer:

2. What do you dislike about creating your portfolio?

Answer:

Besides the assigned homework, do you put something else in your portfolio? What are they? Why do you put them in your portfolio?

Answer:

Which part of your portfolio do you think can best represent you? Why?
Answer:

What do you plan to include in your portfolio besides the homework? Why?

Answer:

Do you often view the artifacts in your portfolio? Can you identify what you can do better next time?

Answer:

Do you think if portfolio can document your English learning progress? If it can, in what ways?

Answer:

What do you think about the feedback from your classmates? Are they helpful? Why/why not?

Answer:

Does the portfolio help you make sense of what you are learning in class? Examples!

Answer:

Do you think if doing portfolio can enhance the communication with classmates and the teacher? How?

Answer:

Which skills (including reading, writing, speaking and listening) do you think you improved from doing the portfolio? Why?

Answer:

Do you prefer being assessed by portfolio or traditional paper-and-pencil tests? Or both? Why?

Answer:

Is there any concern/disadvantage of creating your portfolio?

Answer:

Other:

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Appendix III: Self-assessment checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the best parts of your portfolio?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journals on English learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay on the topic of leisure time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay on the impact of TV on our lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-chosen artifacts, including diary, pictures and so on

Other: ____________________________________________

How would you rate your portfolio from 1 to 5 (1 means poor, 5 means excellent)? Why?

Answer:

1 point: Poor
2 points: Not good
3 points: Fair
4 points: Good
5 points: Excellent

Why: _____________________________________________

Please look at your essay on leisure time, what are your strengths and weaknesses? Why do you think they are? What would you rate it from 1 to 5?

Answer:

1 point: Poor
2 points: Not good
3 points: Fair
4 points: Good
5 points: Excellent

Strengths: __________________________________________

Weaknesses: _________________________________________

Please look at your essay on the impact of TV on our lives, what are your strengths and weaknesses? Why do you think they are? How would you rate it from 1 to 5?

Answer:

1 point: Poor
2 points: Not good
3 points: Fair
4 points: Good
5 points: Excellent

Strengths: __________________________________________

Weaknesses: _________________________________________